

Stitches in time: Inmates crochet for the poor

By Elissa Serrao
Staff reporter

NEW CASTLE — For Barbara White, crocheting sweaters for underprivileged children is her way of paying it forward.

"If you would have said to me 10 years ago that I'd be in prison I wouldn't have believed it," said White, 54, an inmate at the Delores J. Baylor Women's Correctional Institution. "But I am. And this is my way for me to keep contact with the outside world. I'll never ever forget seeing a photo for the first time of a child wearing the sweaters we made. I still have it. I put a little something of myself in every sweater I make."

White is one of 16 women in Baylor who participate in Knit for Kids, a national effort begun in 1996 that provides crocheted and knitted sweaters to impoverished children worldwide. The project was brought to the women of Baylor in 2002 by Peg Dulin, a member of Cathedral of St. Peter Parish in Wilmington, who has volunteered at the prison for 15 years. To date, 77 women from Baylor have participated in the project and more than 1,000 sweaters have been shipped to children in the United States and around the world.

"The women have really taken to it," said Dulin. "They help each other learn to crochet if someone hasn't done it before. They learn cooperation. It's time for them to start giving back to the community and



Barbara White (left) and Paulette Winkfield crochet sweaters for children at the Delores J. Baylor Women's Correctional Institution in New Castle.

they're enthusiastic about it. Every time they make five they get a special certificate. It shows they are working on themselves and making beneficial use of their time."

For Paulette Winkfield, 45, making sweaters is a way to remove herself from the chaos of daily prison life. "Crocheting calms me down and soothes me. I can block it all out if I need to." Winkfield, who's been involved in the program since its inception, said it's also her way of making amends with her past. "I've

caused a lot of harm in my addictions," she said. "When Peg shows me pictures of the kids who get the sweaters, it's like seeing a child's face on Christmas morning and I know I've done a good thing."

"I use the picture of the children wearing the sweaters as a bookmark so I'm always reminded of them," said Tracey Heiney, 38. "It's a prayerful time for me, too."

Helping others

Women who work with



The Dialog/Don Blake

Peg Dulin, a member of Cathedral of St. Peter Parish in Wilmington, started the Knit for Kids program at the prison in 2002.

her on the project learn about choices, said Dulin. "They are making the best of the situation at hand. They have the choice to sit and do nothing or they can work to help others." And though she doesn't have exact statistics, Dulin said she thinks the project breeds success. "Fewer women who participate in the project come back here than those who don't, it seems."

The project has continued to thrive every year through donations of money, yarn and supplies from individuals and local parishes. "It's an evolving ministry," said Dulin. "We don't know where we will be next year. We just count on the Holy Spirit to guide us."

To donate money or new and used yarn to Knit for Kids, contact Peg Dulin at 655-7740.

[Back to top](#)